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ABSTRACT

By participating in the cultivation and preservation of existing cultural assets in developing nations, and by promoting the cultural, literary, and artistic manifestations within those countries, the West German government seeks to establish the essential prerequisites required for a thriving dialogue with those nations, and can aid in their development in a positive manner. Cultural interchange between nations and the mutual respect it engenders are the indispensable elements in building bridges between nations and cultures and laying the foundations upon which political and economic cooperation can thrive. West Germany has aided by providing financial and technical assistance for the following projects: (1) restoration of temple murals at Wat Suthat in Thailand; (2) renovation of the Tanah Lot Temple in Indonesia; (3) urban development of Bhaktapur in Nepal; (4) restoration of pre-Columbian musical instruments in Ecuador; (5) preservation of the San'a Koran manuscripts in the Yemen Arab Republic; (6) restoration of antique objects found in a shipwreck near Mahdia in Tunisia; and (7) the restoration of the royal palaces of Abomey in Benin. West Germany has also participated tales, and the like in the Ivory Coast, Niger, Madagascar, Brazil, and elsewhere. (PPB)

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Culture - A Bridge to Understanding

Projects of the Federal Republic of Germany for Preserving the Cultural Assets of the Third World

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Introduction

Every day we see pictures from China, India or Chile on TV or in the paper, and we can fly to Sri Lanka or Kenya in a few hours - but this closeness to the countries of the so-called Third World is not genuine. Reports on hunger, drought or floods, on the one hand, and views of stereotype building complexes, hotel chains or attractive beaches, on the other, determine our picture of the developing countries. There are exceptions, but they remain precisely that.

What do we, what does the tourist or TV viewer from the Federal Republic of Germany, know about India's cultural and spiritual roots or about the different values and traditions of the 51 countries on the African continent? Western civilization with its dominant technology, industry and consumption, with its own thought and behaviour patterns, has - as a result of its influence - caused negative changes in many Third World countries, one manifestation of which is the collapse of established cultural values and structures. Manners and customs become foreignized, and formerly original native art is now reproduced thousandfold as a souvenir for tourists. One has come to realize that mistakes in development assistance were often due to a lack of understanding for cultural conditions - development, however, is a process of gradual emancipation based on the people's own cultural resources and self-perception.

In the national and international debate on development and cultural policy, increasing attention is being paid to the importance of the cultural identity of nations. In order to stop the emerging decay and destruction of established cultural structures and traditions and to promote the interests of nations whose cultural identity is in jeopardy, the United Nations proclaimd in late 1986 a "World Decade for Cultural Development". The plan of action for this decade lasting from 1988 to 1997 has four main objectives: acknowledging the cultural dimension of development, affirming and enriching cultural identities, broadening participation in culture and promoting international cultural cooperation.

Through its membership of UNESCO, the Federal Republic of Germany has since 1951 been supporting the cultural activities of the United Nations. Preserving valuable art treasures and saving irreplaceable cultural monu-

ments are an important area of multilateral cooperation pursued under the 1972 Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.

At the bilateral level, the Federal Republic of Germany has signed cultural agreements with 60 countries, including 36 in the Third World, thus facilitating the conduct of a dialogue in a spirit of partnership. Cultural exchanges with the Third World account for about a half of the Federal Foreign Office's 1988 cultural affairs budget totalling about DM 900 mill.

Part of the practical work connected with cultural relations is performed by so-called intermediary organizations, which are publicly sponsored. They include the 148 branches of the Goethe Institute, which arrange activities in 68 countries of the world with a special accent on participation by indigenous artists and scientists.

Activities abroad by diplomatic missions, political foundations, churches, the many governmental and non-governmental development aid organizations, over 120 bilateral societies, universities and the federal states, cities and communities likewise contribute towards the cultural dialogue.

This publication is intended to highlight a special aspect of German cultural relations: the cultivation and preservation of existing cultural assets and the promotion of cultural, literary and artistic manifestations. Cultural preservation projects are designed to lay the basis for an autonomous cultural image of the developing countries, which is the prerequisite for a thriving dialogue between nations.

International Cultural Relations - Bridges Across Frontiers

"Only if the cultural and social features of each country are fully taken into account can development goals be defined. We do not want industrialization to jeopardize a country's own identity. Development should also bring cultural assets to bear better and not foster a uniform industrial society without any contours."
(Richard von Weizsäcker speaking at the Overseas Imports Fair "Partners in Progress" in West Berlin, 1986)

Anyone who follows the speeches of German politicians or the reports and debates of the Bundestag on cultural relations will repeatedly come across the expression "promotion of cultural identities". This is based on the recognition that every developing country, be it in Africa, Asia or Latin America, has its very own cultural seedbed and that a development policy founded on partnership must also provide help for self-help in cultural terms so that indigenous cultural values and assets can be rediscovered, preserved and developed further.

A milestone in the framing of German cultural policy vis-à-vis the Third World was the symposium entitled "International Cultural Relations - Bridging Frontiers", which was held at Bonn in 1980 and attended by representatives from 54 countries, including 29 in the Third World. The main tasks of this German policy were defined: encouragement of cultural self-reliance, assistance in achieving economic independence, consolidation of political sovereignty. Helmut Schmidt, Chancellor at that time, stated that cultural relations should be marked by respect for foreign cultures, and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher stressed: "Cultural interchange performs an indispensable function in foreign policy: by building bridges of understanding and fostering communication between nations and cultures, it lays a lasting foundation for political and economic cooperation in this one world."

The Socio-Cultural Dimension of Development Policy

As President Richard von Weizsäcker once put it, development policy calls for patience, the willingness and ability to learn through self-criticism, and a great deal of courage.

In the 1970s the Federal Republic of Germany's development policy mainly focused on the economic and technological sectors, but towards the end of the decade there emerged an increasingly lively discussion on the socio-cultural dimension of the North-South dialogue. Hildegard Hamm-Brücher, who was Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office from 1976 to 1982, played a key role in stimulating development and cultural policies geared towards the reinforcement of cultural identities. She became known beyond the frontiers of the Federal Republic of Germany as an expert on education and through her development and cultural policy initiatives.

Her demand that development be viewed as a socio-culturally comprehensive process that does not occur one-dimensionally through transfer and imitation has become an integral part of development cooperation.

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation, assisted by scientists, practitioners, political foundations and churches, has meanwhile established socio-cultural planning criteria for development cooperation. A study by the Ministry on the causes of wholly or largely unsuccessful projects had revealed that in 75 per cent of the cases "the socio-cultural environment was not adequately considered when defining the project goals". The experience gained from about 30 years of development cooperation thus calls for more differentiated and case-by-case approaches; the cultural backdrop of projects is to be examined to ensure that innovation is compatible with the values and standards of the "target group".

Economic Cooperation Minister Hans Klein has described the principles of his development policy: "For the purpose of effective development policy, I shall make sure to a greater extent that established structures in developing countries are used and not destroyed, that cultural identities are cultivated and not buried, that religious feelings are respected and not harmed."

Policy of Cultural Familiarization

The results of the 1980 symposium "International Cultural Relations - Bridging Frontiers" were two years later incorporated into the "Ten Theses of the Federal Foreign Office on Cultural Relations and Cooperation with Countries of the Third World", which are just as relevant today. At UNESCO's World Conference on Cultural Policies held in Mexico in 1982, the Ten Theses met with great interest and positive reactions. They contain principles of partnership and cooperation that form the guidelines for German cultural relations, as formulated by Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher at the United Nations in New York in autumn 1984:

"Cultural exchanges between North and South must not be banished to the fringe of the North-South dialogue, but must be at its very heart. Our world is full of cultural prejudices, often rooted in ignorance. We all have more to learn from each other. The North may be richer than the

South, but it is not thereby wiser, more human or more cultivated. The cultures of North and South must each recognize the equivalence of the other in its own cultural dignity."

The Ten Theses set out from the diversity of cultures which, combined with differences in the level of social and economic development, demands from us a large measure of understanding, intuition and flexibility. The cultural cooperation we offer must not destroy or replace the established cultural structures, the religious beliefs and the behavioural patterns of our partners, but ought to supplement and vitalize them in accordance with our partners' wishes. The general principles of cooperation seek to ensure that the forces for self-help in developing countries can emerge through a linkage between cultural, social and economic development; the aim is not one-sided "cultural export", but reciprocity in cultural relations that creates self-assurance vis-à-vis industrial nations and confidence in them.

A prerequisite for advancing development processes is to secure basic education for everyone. Literacy and basic occupational qualifications are in turn preconditions for the development of autonomous educational structures, which can be supported by ad hoc offers of help by the Federal Republic of Germany designed to promote self-help. In the field of higher education and science, the exchange of scientists is but one of many ways of establishing self-reliant research and teaching.

Based on these principles of cooperation, the promotion of cultural identities is a central theme of the Ten Theses.

Promotion of Cultural Identities

In seeking to pave the way for successful partnership with Third World countries, the Federal Republic of Germany no longer employs global recipes, but country-based or at most regional approaches. However, in many countries, especially the poorest, specific conditions must first be created for a dialogue. Thus the fifth of the Ten Theses (Promotion of cultural identities) states: The central element of our cooperation is the promotion of self-awareness and independence among developing countries. The following are considered to be particularly suitable measures:

- cultivation and preservation of existing cultural assets (collections, archives, museums, excavations, historical and cultural research);
- promotion of contemporary cultural, literary and artistic manifestations (literature, pictorial arts, music, theatre, dance, applied arts, urban planning, sport and games).

There are innumerable opportunities in these fields in the developing countries: decaying temples and places of worship; excavations which remain incomplete due to lack of funds; valuable discoveries which are not restored; traditional customs which are not recorded in archives; museums that are not built; young talented persons for whom no assistance is available; history which is neither researched nor written; literature which is neither printed nor translated.

Cultural Preservation

The promotion of cultural identities is an approach reflected most clearly in the cultural preservation programme, also known as the cultural assistance programme, which has existed for about ten years now. The programme focuses on a central element of German cultural relations with Third World and other countries: cooperation in coping with the development-related cultural conflict between traditions and innovation by offering help for self-help. This means quickly and unbureaucratically providing material assistance if, say, a historically important temple is about to collapse in a developing country or if a country lacks the funds and staff needed to restore archaeological discoveries.

Though the funds are fairly modest - about DM 2.6 mill. are earmarked for these projects in 1988 - this type of development aid in particular meets with a very favourable reaction by our partner countries. On a bilateral basis, the Federal Republic of Germany has sponsored over a hundred such projects worldwide, e.g. the conservation of palm leaf manuscripts in northern Thailand or the founding of the Sahel Museum at Bamako in Mali.

An application with a Federal German post or mission in the respective host country or with the Goethe Institute and a financial plan are the formal prerequisites for a project. The country should furnish proof of its interest in cooperation and preferably make contributions of its own.

A breakdown by areas indicates the wide range of measures sponsored or eligible for promotion. The projects include not only the restoration of historical buildings and monuments, of archaeological discoveries, murals and manuscripts, but also the establishment, reorganization and counselling of museums as well as assistance to archives and libraries. Support for the publication of national literature, collections of myths or folktales and translations into the national language, grants towards printing costs, the promotion of theatre, music, arts and crafts, the recording of oral traditions and the organization of exhibitions and colloquia are further projects. Finally, basic or advanced training courses for indigenous experts, e.g. restorers, held in the respective country or in the Federal Republic of Germany ensure that genuine help for self-help is provided.

Within a few years a new field of cooperation on equal terms has emerged here, giving concrete expression to the oft-neglected cultural element of development aid. This cultural assistance programme has been steadily expanded in recent years (1981: DM 0.9 mill., 1988: DM 2.6 mill.).

There is now hardly a Third World country in which not at least one cultural preservation project has been successfully carried out. Between 1981 and 1987 the Federal Foreign Office sponsored 400 projects in 81 countries at a total cost of DM 12.5 mill.

Cultivation and Preservation of Existing Cultural Assets

Temples, churches, places of worship, historical towns and buildings, archaeological discoveries, old manuscripts and paintings and many other items testify to diverse eras and nations, to past values and lifestyles. In the cultivation and preservation of cultural assets, the aesthetic quality of historical monuments is not the sole criterion; the restoration of a temple, for example, also provides insights into old handicraft traditions, which can be relearnt in this fashion. In addition, dealing directly with old buildings or archaeological discoveries supplies guidance and solutions for future activities.

The cultural preservation projects of the Federal Republic of Germany seek to fulfil these requirements.

Thailand: The Murals at Suthat Monastery and Other Projects

"As one of Asia's old and great cultural nations, Thailand has always strongly fascinated many people in Germany", wrote Jürgen Möllemann, formerly Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office, in the foreword to the publication "Wat Suthat - An Example of German Cultural Assistance". In 1982, the bicentenary of Bangkok, the Thai government and the Federal German government decided jointly to restore the murals in the assembly hall of Suthat monastery ("Wat"). High humidity, rain and bats living under the roof of the temple threatened to destroy the murals stemming from the days of King Rama III (1824-1851).

Over 2,500 m² of murals on the walls of the Vihāra (assembly hall) and its eight pillars had to be restored - not an everyday task for the restorers, architects, civil engineers and art historians. Before starting their activities, art students and graduates of colleges of design had to pass an aptitude test. Craftsmen and auxiliaries completed the team. Diverse institutions, e.g. the Rhenish Office for Historical Monuments, Bonn, and the Senckenberg Society for Natural Science, Frankfurt/Main, became involved in the the execution of the project. Two German scientists travelled to Bangkok several times at the request of the Federal Foreign Office in order to appraise the work at Wat Suthat and provide advice. The most modern scientific and technological methods were applied so as to preserve the fragments and restore the pictures; even a special conservation technique was developed.

This cultural preservation project completed in 1985 set a precedent for other restoration activities on various temples in Bangkok; advanced training seminars for restorers, archaeologists and abbots of monasteries possessing murals were organized by the fine arts office attached to the Thai Ministry of Education.

The total cost of about DM 1 mill., to which the Federal Foreign Office contributed almost DM 900,000, included a detailed publication in German and Thai. This book comprising mainly colour photographs provides the reader with an interesting survey of the history and significance of Thai painting and explains the murals in the assembly hall of Wat Suthat. Of educational value are also the explanations on the conservation methods.

In 1986 the Federal Republic of Germany and the Kingdom of Thailand agreed on further projects for the cultivation of indigenous cultural assets. For instance, northern Thailand, where the Lan Na kingdom was once located, possesses a rich and unique culture.

Prof. Oskar von Hinüber (left) from Freiburg treating palm leaf manuscripts from northern Thailand

Between the 13th and 16th centuries numerous manuscripts were written there on palm leaves; they are spread among more than 3,000 temples in the region. Many of the texts open up a wide field of research for linguists, literary scholars, anthropologists, sociologists and cultural or religious historians. Using the most up-to-date scientific methods, a team of experts is endeavouring to conserve the manuscripts. Monks and laymen are also involved in the work, thus fostering an awareness of the value of cultural assets among the public at large, too.

Another German-Thai cultural assistance project was successfully completed in 1987. In the town of Chiang Rai, the centre of the Lan Na culture, founded in 1262 and likewise situated in northern Thailand, numerous historical monuments are in decay or have completely vanished. With Ger-

man aid, the provincial administration rebuilt parts of the former town wall and, in keeping with an old tradition, reerected a town column on Doi (hill) Jom Thong to symbolize the town's spiritual centre. Upon completion of the project, a 100-page brochure in Thai and English was published in 2,000 copies.

Indonesia: The Tanah Lot Temple

Every year thousands of tourists visit the Indonesian island of Bali. On Bali, as on the other islands, there are many temples which are an attraction for travellers and can acquaint the latter with the country's rich history and its religious traditions. The 15th-century Hindu temple of Tanah Lot, situated on a coral reef on the southern coast of Bali, is one such attraction. Water erosion threatened to destroy the temple, and considerable damage had already been occurring for a long time. In mid-1988 the renovation of the Tanah Lot temple, to which the Federal Republic of Germany contributed DM 54,000, was completed.

Nepal: Bhaktapur Urban Development

The boundary between technical cooperation and cultural assistance is sometimes fluid, as demonstrated by the project "Bhaktapur Urban Development and Renewal", supported by the German Corporation for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation. When the work was started in 1974, Bhaktapur, a flourishing economic and cultural centre in mediaeval Nepal, was one of the poorest and most underdeveloped towns in Kathmandu valley.

The aim was to open up this culturally and historically important town to tourism, thus paving the way for economic recovery. Until 1979, water reservoirs for wells were cleaned, sewage pipes laid, roads paved, waste disposal facilities provided and homes fitted with sanitary installations.

In the north-eastern part of the town, formerly the centre, the monument preservation activities focused on the area around the architecturally precious Dattatreya temple. There it proved possible to restore various buildings, including valuable private houses and temples, two of which

are now a museum. The objective was to enable the district to regain its original character. Traditional handicraft skills were revived, and local arts and crafts, such as wood carving, were stimulated.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl visiting the Bhaktapur urban development project in Nepal in 1987

In a later phase of the project, the inhabitants of Bhaktapur and the municipal administration became more involved in the organization and planning, with local development committees playing a key role. The last project execution phase finished in 1986. During the follow-up phase, due to end in 1991, two newly established institutions, namely the Nagar Panchayat Technical Unit (the building department of the municipal administration) and the Monument Maintenance Office (a branch of the authority for the preservation of historical monuments), are to complete the re-

maining urban development tasks in collaboration with other municipal institutions. During this period the Federal Republic of Germany will continue to provide financial and staff support.

Ecuador: Restoration of Pre-Columbian Musical Instruments

In the 1960s, interest grew in the archaeology of Ecuador not only among indigenous researchers. In step with an increasing number of excavations, there emerged among the public an awareness of the national cultural identity, the foundations of which were sought in the wealth of items unearthed. To curb the brisk trade in archaeological objects and prevent entire collections of artifacts from earliest history from being sold abroad, the government enacted a law to protect and preserve the cultural heritage. The Banco Central del Ecuador began in the 1970s to purchase all archaeological items offered by dealers and private collectors, and sales abroad were banned. The central bank also took charge of the artifacts discovered by archaeologists and provided facilities and premises for salvaging the finds. The items were placed in museums built specifically for this purpose and are now shown to the public in permanent or alternating exhibitions. In these efforts, foreign specialists were consulted from the outset wherever possible because the objects had to be examined for authenticity and assigned to Ecuador's various epochs and cultures. The most varied and numerous finds were from the country's coastal cultures, which are covered by the Museo Antropológico del Banco Central in Guayaquil. There by far the biggest collection in the country is to be found. It contains a large number of musical instruments that have in the past scarcely been examined.

In late 1985 Ecuador's central bank filed an application for cultural assistance with the Federal Foreign Office in Bonn via the German embassy in Quito. An expert from the Federal Republic of Germany was to investigate the musical instruments not only from an archaeological point of view, but also in terms of their musical significance.

The musical instruments of ancient Ecuador differ greatly from those of other Andean countries as regards shape, method of manufacture and type of sound production. Even the instruments of the many successive cultures in the period from about 3000 B.C. to 1500 A.D., i.e. up to the Conquis-

Figurines like this Ecuadorian musician with pan-pipes and rattle (Jama Coaque culture, 300 B.C.-700 A.D.) adorn vessels or are separate statuettes

ta, differ in shape and tone from those of cultures existing elsewhere at the same time within the country. The main items preserved are vessel flutes (ocarinas) and whistles made of clay, which amount to hundreds or even thousands. There are also lithophones, chimes, campanas and jingle bells made of metal as well as trumpets, rattles - also of clay - and a few drums. Remarkable are the numerous figurines portraying musicians; they are either statuettes in their own right or are adornments on vessels.

In view of the strong musical inclinations of Latin American peoples, the discovery of these sound instruments was extremely important and also fascinating because of the almost unlimited diversity that was previously known only partly. The aim from the outset was therefore to list all instruments in a catalogue and thus make them accessible to the public. This work was to be carried out not only in Guayaquil, but also at the central bank's other museums (so far in Quito and Cuenca, but new museums are constantly emerging for the sake of preserving the archaeological heritage). The instruments were photographed and measured; sound tests were made and recorded on tape - almost all instruments are in such good condition that they can be played. The sounds obtained provide insights into possible musical concepts in ancient Ecuador. Even at this stage it is becoming clear that they were fundamentally different to those of other pre-Columbian cultures as regards sequences of notes, timbres and tonal ranges. This practical work on the sound instruments is the only means of becoming acquainted with the music of the past as no written sources or musical notes have been handed down. Only after very many series of tests, constant comparisons of the instruments and investigations into all aspects of these highly unfamiliar instruments can we get close to those musical concepts.

In Europe and North America, musical instruments from ancient Mexico and Peru are known, but none or hardly any from Ecuador. The cultural preservation project in Ecuador makes it possible to do archaeological pioneering work in a specific field, thus providing new insights for musicology in the Federal Republic of Germany, too. A publication on this project is currently being prepared.

Yemen Arab Republic: Koran Manuscripts in San'a and Other Projects

The old part of San'a in the Yemen Arab Republic

San'a, the capital of the Yemen Arab Republic, is one of the world's oldest towns and possesses cultural assets that particularly deserve to be preserved. Up to eight storeys high are the houses in the old part of the town, with delicate arches and merlons. Towering over them is the Great Mosque. While renovating the western facade of the mosque, workers discovered in 1972 in a space between the roof and ceiling an unprecedented number of early Koran manuscripts from the 7th to 12th centuries A.D.

This sensational discovery - over 2,000 pages - could provide mankind with information on the origins and early development of the Koran and of written Arabic. Before this find only meagre testimonies to the past were believed to have been preserved because the famous Arab libraries of Baghdad, Cairo and Medina were destroyed, and the few manuscripts remaining are dispersed in museums and libraries throughout the world. The key to the spiritual origins of Islam was throught to have been lost forever.

In 1980 the Federal Republic of Germany and the Yemen Arab Republic concluded an agreement on a project for restoring and cataloguing the manuscripts. Internationally famous German experts on Islam and restorers have been dealing with this task for several years now. The items discovered are systematically recorded, the parchments are cleaned so as to remove the dirt accumulated over the centuries and then smoothed, and the writing is made legible again and conserved.

The specialists from the Federal Republic of Germany are confident that the valuable find can be made accessible in its entirety to the people of Yemen, to Islam and to international scholars. Accounting for DM 2 mill., this manuscripts project is financially one of the largest cultural assistance projects, under which two Yemenites are also being trained as restorers.

The Federal Republic of Germany is also participating in the redevelopment of the old part of San'a; the Bavarian Agency for the Preservation of Monuments and a German civil engineer support the redevelopment office run by Yemen and supervise the redevelopment projects sponsored with cultural assistance funds from the Federal Foreign Office. In particular, this includes the renewal of a former caravanserai. Plans for its use are still being discussed; the main idea considered is to employ the building as a "house of art" with exhibition and work rooms for artists. In the restoration activities, particular importance is attached to applying traditional materials and handicraft methods and to reactivating almost forgotten wood- and metal-working skills.

The National Museum in San'a possesses two bronze statues depicting two queens from Yemen in the late 3rd century A.D. This, too, was a German cultural assistance project, which permitted full-scale restoration of the fragments and reconstruction of the two larger-than-life statues.

Experts from the Central Roman-Germanic Museum in Mainz, where the bronze fragments were taken to in 1977, developed a special technique for treating, reconstructing and restoring the pieces. The result of this project lasting five years, which has been documented at exhibitions in the Federal Republic of Germany and Yemen, is "a successful example of how cultural assistance involving scientific research proves to be mutually beneficial", as is stated in a publication of the museum in Mainz.

Tunisia: The Mahdia Shipwreck

Nobody knows how many antique treasures still lie on the sea-bed. Yet numerous finds, many recovered a long time ago, are still awaiting restoration because in most cases the necessary funds and experts are not available. This was also true of antique items salvaged from the sea-bed off the Tunisian coast: In 1907, sponge fishers discovered a shipwreck near Mahdia; experts believe the ship was travelling from Athens to Rome in about 80 B.C. and transporting parts and furnishings for the home of a rich citizen. It is not clear why it came to North Africa and sank there.

Last year the treasures were brought from Tunisia to the Federal Republic of Germany in order to be restored at the Rhenish Museum in Bonn. The entire project, agreed on with the Tunisian government and the Bardo Museum as the home of the items, is financed by the Federal Foreign Office and the Gertrud Henkel Foundation. The Rhenish Museum provides the necessary premises and the know-how of its restorers. Considerable new ground has to be broken in this research. In the course of several years it is intended to reconstruct some 400 parts of the 2000 year old Mahdia find.

The biggest items are two bronze statues, a winged youth (Agon or Enagonios) and a herm. Apart from restoration, the experts will examine the origin, the exact age and the method of manufacture of the treasures - a highly important project for the study of classical antiquity worldwide.

People's Republic of Benin: The Royal Palaces of Abomey

One of the numerous sights of the People's Republic of Benin in West Africa that have until now scarcely been developed are the many former royal palaces. The palaces of Abomey are some of the relicts of local ruling families, who were important to the country's history in pre-colonial

times. Today Abomey's palaces, some of them two-storey loam-work buildings from the mid-17th century, are open to the public as museums. In workshops and at the sales stalls of craftsmen - braziers, tailors, woodcarvers and weavers - traditional techniques are employed as a real-life adjunct to the palace museum.

A hurricane in 1985 caused considerable damage, especially to the roofs of the buildings. Some structural preservation measures were carried out with UNESCO funds. As the eaves of the makeshift corrugated-iron roofing do not overhang far enough, the outside walls, which are adorned with valuable reliefs, are inadequately protected against rain. It is also necessary to restore the exhibits - the wooden and textile items in particular are in critical condition.

In this context, too, the Federal Republic of Germany provides financial support for the restoration of the royal palaces; this year it has paid DM 60,000 for this purpose. Further funds are supplied by the Federal Foreign Office for the advanced training of a museum expert: Benin possesses only three state museums, but there are plans to erect an open-air museum in one of the country's provincial capitals.

Promotion of Cultural, Literary and Artistic Manifestations

Music, dance, arts and crafts, painting, language and literature are essential elements of culture - they are its vivid and most original manifestations. They permit the full development of the creativity of an individual or a nation, they are a means for people to express their specific thoughts and feelings. The lifestyles and working methods of people who are still very close to nature are also covered by this general concept of cultural manifestations because they continue to make a decisive contribution to the overall cultural identity of a nation.

In 1988 alone, roughly 20 projects in the field of cultural, literary and artistic manifestations were sponsored from the Federal Foreign Office's cultural preservation fund. They included a donation in kind to the Costa Rican state dance ensemble, a publication on contemporary Senegalese painting, funds for producing a gramophone record entitled "Sierra Leone Music", a violin-making workshop in Thailand and support for a cultural week in Burkina Faso.

Hildegard Hamm-Brücher, then Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office, visiting Afienya youth training centre in Ghana in 1978

Ivory Coast: Recording Traditional Music

"The traditional music of the over 60, in some cases highly different ethnic groups of Côte d'Ivoire is threatened by slow death... and is increasingly being distorted by the influences of modern music and by show elements intended for tourists." Thus began a letter sent by the Goethe Institute in Abidjan to the Federal Foreign Office in Bonn, requesting the initiation of a cultural preservation project for recording the traditional music of the Ivory Coast.

The aim is to travel through the country for two years recording the music of specific ethnic groups, which will then be broadcast by the national radio station. With the aid of radio, which is a widespread medium, reaching even remote villages, the music is to be revived in regions where it is in danger of becoming extinct. After the series of recordings, a phonograph record will be pressed to provide a cross-sectional survey of the typical music of various ethnic groups. At Radio Côte d'Ivoire, a team had already been formed for recording narrated traditions; as technical equipment and the necessary know-how are already available, the Federal Foreign Office merely has to contribute towards the cost of travel and materials.

The project, due to finish in 1989, thus helps not only to preserve the cultural heritage but also to disseminate a traditional means of artistic expression.

Niger: Collection of Songs and Poems

"Chants et Poèmes des Festivals" - this is the title of a collection of folksongs and poems from the Niger completed in 1988 with German cultural preservation funds. For several years, part of the instruction at Niger primary schools had been held in the national languages, but suitable textbooks were lacking in many cases. The 2,000 copies of the collection of folksongs and poems recording the country's oral traditions are now being distributed to schools and to cultural and youth centres.

Madagascar: The "Folktale Collection" Project

Folktales from Madagascar - that sounds a bit like the Arabian Nights, but is completely different. Although the Federal Republic of Germany has cultivated relations with Madagascar for over a hundred years, the Great Island is fairly unknown here, not to mention its literature. Many written and oral traditions have been lost, and storytellers are dying out.

At the recommendation of the German embassy in Madagascar a project entitled "Folktale Collection" came about in 1986, and a National Commitee on Malagasy Folktales was founded. The project manager, Moks Nasoloarisoa Razafindramiandra, a journalist living in the Federal Republic of Germany, collaborates closely with the national archives, the University of Madagascar, the Ministry of Revolutionary Art and Culture and other bodies. On trips through the country, folktales typical of the various regions are collected and then prepared for publication.

Malagasy narrative art can roughly be divided into two branches: The tales of the highlanders in the island's interior usually concern kings and princes, while on the coast one finds mainly animal fables, which always have a moral. The difference between the two forms is due to the large number of immigrants from the Malayo-Polynesian region, who chiefly settled in the coastal area.

Under this cultural preservation project, a German edition of the Malagasy folktales is planned in order to introduce the country's narrative art to Germans.

Brazil: Acquaintance with the Peoples on the Amazon

The cultural traditions and importance of Brazilian Indians are the theme of another cultural preservation project of the Federal Foreign Office initiated by the German towns of Kassel and Nuremberg. As part of the "Acquaintance with Brazil" project lasting several months, an exhibition entitled "The Amazon Region - Home of the Indians" was held in 1988 at Kassel Natural History Museum, having been organized by the architecture and regional planning faculty of Kassel Comprehensive University.

The exhibition, which is also to be shown in Brazil, is intended to present and help preserve the great diversity and cultural heritage of the peoples in the Amazon region.

The peoples of the tropical rain forest, who for centuries geared their lifestyle and livelihoods to the prevailing natural conditions and lived in harmony with the ecosystem, are suffering from the effects of forest destruction. The knowledge of the Indians is, unlike the methods of modern science, based on experience and closely interwoven with ideas about the origin of the world and with religious beliefs. Conveying this knowledge so that Germans and Brazilians alike can appreciate it is one aim of the exhibition. Life in a natural context is shown by featuring Indians, rubber plantation workers, Brazil nut pickers and riparian dwellers.

The prior talks, trips and visits to Brazil by the project group, acting in close cooperation with Brazilian institutions, produced some of the focal points of the exhibition, such as a portrayal of the cultural diversity of the peoples in Javari valley in the north-western tip of the country. Another priority is the regional adaptation of inhabitants to the tropical rain forest. It is made clear that the forest dwellers' lifestyle and livelihood rest on a comprehensive knowledge of plants and animals, simultaneously preserving the forest's complex ecosystem.

Towards Dialogue and Partnership

Theodor Heuss, the first president of the Federal Republic of Germany, once said that you cannot produce culture through politics, but politics through culture. This insight is no doubt reflected in the concept of "cultural policy".

The Federal Republic's cultural policy abroad is founded on reciprocity. This does not mean "exporting" one's own culture; instead it means - apart from depicting one's own culture in partner countries - giving above all Third World nations an opportunity to present their cultural achievements in the Federal Republic of Germany. A major step towards dialogue and partnership is the International Cultural Centre in the West Berlin congress building. From January 1989 onwards, it will be a forum for cultural activities by Third World countries in particular.

Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher has described as follows a characteristic element of culture and the significance of cultural exchange: "Culture is by its very nature directed towards exchange and communication... Hostile preconceptions can persist only as long as we fail to look each other in the face. That is why cultural exchanges are so important."

Hans-Dietrich Genscher (right), Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany, and his Thai counterpart, Air Marshal Siddhi Savetsila, signing a German-Thai cultural agreement in 1983

Nations are now aware of the importance of their own cultural identity, of their own cultural values and traditions. The actions taken by the Federal Republic of Germany to promote cultural identity, which include many small, sometimes seemingly insignificant projects, may often be the first step towards a dialogue, may prove to be bridges of understanding.

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